

2025 Masters Preview



Hello Friends,

It is hard to believe it has been 20 years since Verne asked us, "IN YOUR LIFE...have you ever seen anything like that?" Now Verne is retired, and Tiger has a torn Achilles. Where does the time go?

Twenty years ago, or even 10 years ago it was hard to imagine not having the final round of The Masters as the top priority, but my son is scheduled to have a baseball game Sunday at 5. Apparently neither coach is a golf fan. This year more than ever I am grateful that Augusta has invested heavily in having the best app in all of golf. I don't think I will be the only person at the game with golf going on their phone.

2025 has seen a lot of change in the world. Though golf is stuck in a never-ending negotiation. It will be great to watch all the world's best this week at the same place.

I watched a lot of golf at Augusta National this weekend between the women's amateur and Drive, Chip and Putt. It was hot and the course looks great. A rainy Monday should give way to great conditions all week. There is only a little rain in forecast for a few hours Friday.

I hope everyone can enjoy the week of golf and we are all treated to another amazing Masters!

The Amateurs

The Masters currently is inviting the winner of seven amateur events. The US Amateur Champion, US Amateur runner-up, British Amateur Champion, Asia Pacific Amateur Champion, US Mid-Am Champion, Latin America Amateur Champion and NCAA Champion. This year we only have five amateurs playing though because Wenyi Ding- Asia Pacific Amateur Champion & Jacob Skov Olesen- British Amateur Champion decided to turn pro and start their career rather than wait to play in The Masters. I understand the decision, but it will be interesting to see if they make it to The Masters.

Jose Luis Ballester- US Amateur Champion- Last year during the Masters I heard a statistic that 32% (28 of 88) of the Masters champions played in The Masters as amateurs. Of course Jack, Tiger and Phil with 14 green jackets between them make up half of those winners. Jose, who is from Spain should have as good of an idea of what to do this week as any rookie. He is coached by Sergio Garcia's father and plays for the Arizona State Sun Devils. No doubt if he is anywhere near the leaderboard he will be called the next Seve.

I also want to add, being part of a field hockey family myself, his mom was a 1992 gold medalist for Spain in field hockey.

Noah Kent- US Amateur Runner Up- For the second year in a row a BIG 10 golfer came in second at the US Amateur. Noah is from Naples, Florida but went to Iowa for his first year of college. He was wearing the black and yellow all week at Hazeltine. In a sign of the times, he entered the portal in December and is now a Florida Gator. Apparently, another fall of watching Kirk Ferentz's offense was too much. As far as a sports fan goes, he really picked a good time to transfer. Noah can't play for the Gators this semester due to the transfer so he will be well rested for the week. Hopefully he can have an iconic moment in Butler Cabin like Neal Shipley.



Evan Beck- Mid-Am Champion- As I have mentioned over the years I listen to a lot of golf podcasts. The only one I pay to be a patreon member is Chasing Scratch. The story of two guys who are trying to go from 10 handicaps to scratch golfers. Spoiler alert, they are on season 8. I bring this up because it is hard to be as good at golf as Evan Beck, and Evan is the only person playing this week who isn't making his living playing golf. He works as an investment analyst. He is currently a +6.1 handicap and was a two time all ACC selection for the Wake Forest Demon Deacons back in 2012 and 2013. He was also a pro for four years before getting in the investment analysis game. He is a great player just not compared to the guys who do it for a living.

Hiroshi Tai- NCAA Champion- Hiroshi has had an interesting path to The Masters. He is a junior at Georgia Tech although he graduated from Windermere Prep in 2019. Following high school graduation, he joined the Singapore army before enrolling at Georgia Tech in early 2022.

Justin Hastings- Latin America Amateur Champion- Justin hails from the Cayman Islands. The Cayman Islands only has 27 holes of golf currently open. They used to have 45 but one of their golf courses closed in 2016. Justin is a senior at San Diego State and is beating Xander's all-time scoring record. He says when he was growing up, he would call in sick from school to watch The Masters. Maybe that will help him.

Past Champions



Bernhard Langer- This will be the last year for Bernie. He is the last guy to win a Masters in the 1980s to hang it up. Bernie, who is 67, tore his Achilles last year in what was going to be his final Masters appearance. He made a quick recovery and was back by the middle of the season. The most notable golf he played last year was during the PNC Parent-Child where he and his son dueled all day with Tiger and Charlie. Ultimately the Langer prevailed but Bernie was playing the senior tees. It hardly seemed fair.



Fred Couples- It is once again heartbreak for the Houston Cougars. I feel for Freddie and Jim Nantz. I know Jim was there, but I can't find if Fred was there to watch the Cougars lose last night. When Fred won in 1992, he went to NCAA Championship game in Minnesota and flew to Augusta on Tuesday. Fred is now 65 and making his 40th start. In general, he missed a lot of golf with back issues over the years but only missed The Masters in 1987, 1994 and 2016 since he made his debut in 1983. It sounds like Freddie will play if they let him. Hopefully, he will play well this week to stay encouraged.



Jose Maria Olazabal- Jose gutted out a Sunday finish with a bad back last year. It was the first time he had made the cut since 2014 so I don't expect having to play the weekend will be a problem two years in a row. Most notably since then, he caddied in the DP World (European) Tour Q School last fall for his 16-year-old nephew. I am curious to see if the nephew will be to return the favor this week.



Vijay Singh- It's a curious thing about pro golfers, many of them don't seem to really enjoy playing. Many act like it's a real hardship to get to play golf on the best golf courses in the world week to week. Vijay is not that way. He is now 62 and a decent player on the Champions Tour but golf seems to be the only thing he does. He trains, practices and plays. He made the cut last year for the first time since 2018. He strikes me as a guy who will play until Fred Ridley asks him to call it.

(Note: Vijay withdrew so maybe injury will take him out)



Bubba Watson- Bubba Watson and Paul Brown almost had something in common. As the founder of the Range Goats, Bubba got relegated due to his poor play last season. Fortunately for him, the powers that be were more magnanimous than Art Modell and brought him back again this season. I am sure Bubba has enjoyed drive chip and putt and the Champions dinner, but he won't be involved this weekend. He may join Paul Brown sooner than later as a team founder out of job if he doesn't start playing better.



Mike Weir- Predictably, Mike Weir was unable to rally the International side to a victory in the President's Cup. He has only made the cut twice since 2011. That said, he was laughably bad for the last 10 years he was on tour. He has turned it around and had a nice career on the Champions Tour



Danny Willett- When the calendar turned to 2025 Danny was ranked 598th in the world. He has had a meteoric rise so far this season to 378th in the world. He did shoot 68 in the first-round last year, which surprised even him.

Should they be banned?



Jerk Johnson- Don't Sir Me! What an 18 months it was for the Jerk. No need to rehash it all but he let down America and then yelled at fans having a good time in Phoenix. You'd think he would clean up his act, but does a Tiger change its stripes? Last year the jerk tapped in for a triple on 12 and a few fans clapped. The jerk turned around and yelled, "**** off". Amusingly he was asked about it after the round and denied the whole thing. Then he was told it was on tape and he said he was talking to himself. Who knows what kind of antics this guy will be up to this year? Augusta is playing with fire here.



Angel Cabrera- I don't feel as passionately about Angel not being included, but Angel will set an interesting Masters record this week. He will become the first guy to spend two years in an Argentinian jail and later play in The Masters. I believe more broadly, he is the first person to spend two years in a jail of any country and later play in The Masters.

Trunk Slammers

Rookies

Outside of the first two playing, Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979 remains the only rookie to win The Masters, although Ludvig came close last year. I had the pleasure of meeting Fuzzy's daughter this past year. My son and I met some friends for a drink and she was amongst the friends. I think my son learned some new things from her. She was a character.

In total there are 21 first timers playing this year including the five amateurs discussed.

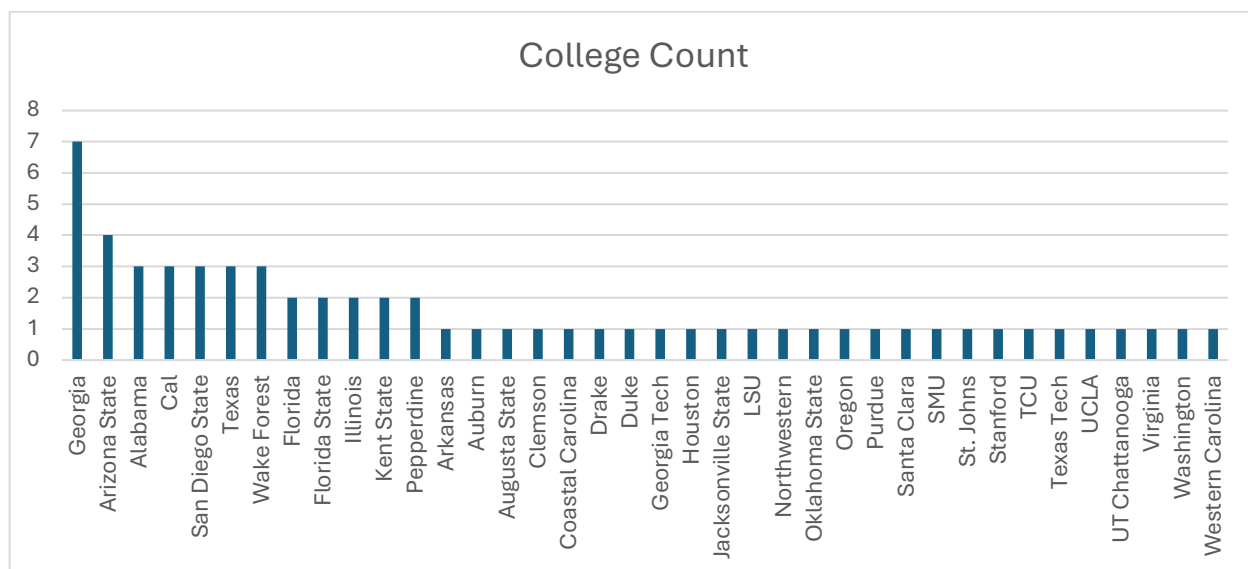
Taylor Pendrith- On Cinco de Mayo of last year, the Canadian put the finishing touches on his win at The Byron Nelson. It was the first PGA Tour win for Taylor. I am sure it doesn't compare with his 2013 victory of the MAC championship. In an indication of how poorly he played the rest of the year, Captain Mike Weir, left him off the Presidents Cup team loaded with Canadians because it was played in Canada. As you might expect from a former MVP of his high school baseball team, he hits it long but struggles with touch around the green. "Chicks dig the long ball."

Matt McCarty- From July 21st through October 13th of last year Matt went on a life changing hot streak. In those four months he won three Korn Ferry Tour events to earn a battlefield promotion to the PGA Tour. He stayed hot and won his first PGA Tour event. It was the debut of The Black Desert Championship in Utah. Those four wins along with a win in the 2021 Wyoming Open are his five professional victories.

Davis Riley- Davis is making his debut at The Masters this year after he beat Scottie to win at Colonial last May. He comes in playing poorly this year. If you are a Davis Riley fan here is where I'd find some hope. He is one of only three people to play in the US Junior final two years in a row, joining Tiger and Jordan Spieth. In Davis case, he lost in the final both years. One year he lost to Scottie and in the second year to Willy Zalatoris. All four of those guys have played very well Augusta National so maybe there is something there.

Davis Thompson- Davis Thompson, like Davis Riley is from the south. Davis Thompson is from Alabama but matriculated to Georgia and joins the long list of UGA dawgs playing in The Masters this year. So, he was an excellent junior golfer. He also was part of a state championship winning basketball team. According to the article I read about the title, he made some clutch free throws to help secure the title.

University of Georgia once again leads the college count with seven Bulldawgs. Including a Yellow Jacket and Patrick Reed from Augusta State we have nine people who went to college in Georgia. The best path to Augusta remains to be born in America and go to college in Georgia.



Kevin Yu- Kevin, born Chun An Yu, won the Sanderson farms tournament in October. It was a heart-breaking loss for the few American Monty, Beau Hossler, fans in the world. Beau lost to Kevin in the playoff. Kevin is from Taiwan but went to Arizona State for college. He turned pro in 2021 after a successful career at Arizona State. Since then, he has played very well and worked his way up the ranks of professional golf.

Nico Echavarria- Statistically, Nico has been the best putter on the PGA Tour this season. Relative to his peers on the PGA Tour he has been terrible at all other aspects of the game. The fact that he is 45th in the FedEx Cup rankings shows Walter Hagen knew what he was talking about when he told Bobby Jones, “three bad shots and one good one still make par.”

Rafael Campos- Rafael will turn 37 next week and is making his debut in any major championship this week. There has been a lot of frustration along the way. Rafael is from Puerto Rico but got his ticket to The Masters on the island of Bermuda thanks to his victory at the Butterfield Bermuda Championship. He attributes his performance in 2023-2024 to a commitment to a fitness and nutrition routine that led to a 50-pound weight loss. Tough timing given the emergence of weight loss drugs at the same time. Anyway, he has really struggled this year.

Joe Highsmith- Joe Highsmith is instantly recognizable because he is both left-handed and wears the full brimmed sun hat. He played his college golf at Pepperdine with Sahith Theegala and turned pro in the summer of 2022. He earned his way to Augusta with a victory at the Cognizant Classic at the neutered Bear trap. His mother was planning to leave after nine holes, but he was playing so well on Sunday she stayed to watch the dramatic finish. For a rookie he has two things going for him. First, he attended the Masters last year as a spectator. Second, his caddie is Joe LaCava IV son of Joe LaCava III who caddied for Freddie and Tiger for many years so he should be able to impart some wisdom.

Brian Campbell- It is rare that I'm watching the PGA Tour on Sunday afternoon and find myself googling a guy in the lead because I have never heard of him. That was the case with Brian Campbell on his way to his eventual win. You could certainly make the argument that the winner of the Vidanta Mexico Open doesn't deserve to get a Masters invite but you'd have to take that up with Fred Ridley. Brian is the shortest hitter on the PGA Tour conceding almost 10 yards off the tee to Jerk Johnson who is the second shortest of PGA Tour players playing this week.

Max Greyserman- Max is a Duke alum and must still be reeling from the dramatic end of the Cooper Flagg era. He is also coming in off two straight missed cuts. Combined with him being a rookie, I don't love his chances.

Max was tangentially involved in the most amusing story of the PGA Tour last year. He was in the final group in Greensboro with El Cheapo Kuchar. Max looked like he was going to win but four putted the 16th hole to blow it. He needed to eagle 18 to tie Aaron Rai. Max went ahead and finished 18 but Kuchar, who had no chance to win, refused due to darkness. Kuchar had to come back Monday morning to finish. Max moved onto the FedEx Cup playoffs and played well enough to earn his trip to Augusta.



Rasmus Højgaard- In another Master's first we have twin brothers playing for the first time at The Masters. The Danish twins Rasmus and Nicolai will both be playing this week. Rasmus won five times last year on the European Tour but has struggled this year where he has primarily played in America.

Thriston Lawrence- Thriston finished fourth at the British Open last year to get a spot in the field. He will be making his Masters debut this week. Curiously, he has been terrible at putting this season but last year was the best putter on the European Tour. I just don't think he will be able to find it this week. He is an avid fisherman so maybe he can get some fishing in this weekend.

Guys who aren't on their game

Jhonattan Vegas- Just when you are about to forget about him, Johnny wins a PGA Tour event. The week after Xander's big win at The British Open, the PGA Tour was back in action on a former sod farm in Minnesota. Someone had to win, and Johnny was the guy. It was his fourth PGA Tour win over a 13-year span. Predictably, Johnny hasn't done much this year. This will be his fourth Masters appearance. Look for him to add another missed cut to his two others.

Patton Kizzire- Patton won the Procore Championship, previously the Fortinet, Safeway and Fries.com Championship last fall. This year has not gone well. A series of bad play was capped by having to issue an apology about punting his putter. It does appear to be excellent form though. Ray Guy would be proud.



J.T. Poston- J.T. picked up his third win on the PGA Tour in the final Shriner's Charity Classic in October. It looks like the Shriners gave him a trophy. The fact that they don't give out a Shriner's hat to the winner is confusing. J.T. has struggled on the greens this year. So far this year he has been one of the worst putters on tour. He has finished 30th and 34th the last two years.

Adam Schenk- Adam Schenk finished tied for 12th in 2024 which is why he is here. He was riding high after Purdue made it to the championship game on the tall and broad shoulders of Zach Edey. This year he comes in following four straight missed cuts.

Matthieu Pavon- One thing I learned this year is the saying “Sacre Bleu” is an outdated and seldom used, and possibly offensive saying in French. Up until this year I thought it was a common saying the French used all the time to express frustration. Then I said it one time at home and my wife, who took French in high school, told me she had never heard of the term. Sure enough, she was right after I googled it.

A year ago, Matthieu was coming in as one of the hottest players in the world and finished 12th. This year his best finish has been a tie for 42nd. Sacre Bleu indeed.

Austin Eckroat- Last year Austin was one of only six people who won more than once on the PGA Tour. Of course, Scottie won seven times, then Xander, Hideki, Bob MacIntyre, Nick Dunlap and Austin won twice each. It was Austin’s second win at the World Wide Technology Championship that got him this year’s Masters invitation. His approach game has been killing him this year and his short game has been worse. Not good anywhere but especially at a course like Augusta.

Byeong Hun (Ben) An- In 2005, the same year of Tiger’s famous chip in, Ben moved from Korea to Florida to attend the David Leadbetter Academy. Notably he won the US Amateur in 2009 and made his Masters debut. This will be his 6th Masters appearance over the course of 15 years. He had his best finish last year at 16th, but this year he is putting and hitting his irons poorly.

Chris Kirk- Chris Kirk seems to be a nice normal guy and good pro golfer. He has been a great player since he was a junior golfer. He is turning 40 next month and seems to be a little off his game so I don’t love his chances, but I do enjoy watching his swing the club.

Sam Burns- Sam has new perspective thanks to the birth of his son Bear last year. Possibly named after The Golden Bear? If so, maybe I have higher hopes for him. However, his golf hasn’t changed dramatically. He is one of the best putters in the world but struggles (compared to his peers) at all other phases of the game. His Master’s record is cut-29th-cut. I see no reason to expect it to change this year.

Cameron Davis- Cameron hails from Australia, lives in Seattle and thrives in Detroit. He won his second Rocket Mortgage Championship in July, which was also his second PGA Tour win. This season he finished 5th at Pebble Beach and then hasn’t made a cut since then.

Cameron Young- I thought maybe TGL would be a good venue for Cameron since his game seems ideal for a simulator. I won’t even say he has a boring personality because I don’t think he ever spoke during the TGL. Who knows what he might have said? Cameron isn’t having a very good year. He has played well in the Masters the last two years with a 7 and 9th place finish. On the off chance he does win, it will be a very short speech in the Butler Cabin.

Tom Kim- I googled Tom Kim to see what was going on with him. I think due to his pending military service one of the suggested searches was, “who was the smallest person to ever serve

in the military?” Apparently there was a guy named Richard Flaherty who was 4’9” and was a captain from 1967-1971 of course serving in Vietnam. He was nicknamed “The Giant Killer.” Anyway, this really has nothing to do with “The Internation Superstar.” The results so far this year are not indicating greatness this week.

Nick Dunlap- “Check in time is at 3 pm”

“No showers longer than 5 minutes. This is not a spa.”



Best commercial on tv

Like Caleb Downs and Seth McLaughlin, Nick left Alabama in the winter of 2024 when Nick Saban became a bed and breakfast owner. He won twice last year. However, this year he has really struggled. He is the worst player off the tee on tour due his inaccuracy. “No fun, no games”.

Matt Fitzpatrick- When they played the Masters last year Fitzzy was the 10th ranked player in the world. This year he is 74th in the world. From 2022, the year he won the US Open, to now his total strokes gained ranking has gone from 2nd, 21st in 2023, 60th in 2024 and now 144th. He known for taking notes on every shot he hits. He needs to study his notes from 2022.

Max Homa- After Morikawa made a double on 9, Aberg made a double on 11, Max was the closest chaser to Scottie when he teed off on 12 in last year’s final round. An unfortunate bounce on 12 led to his chances ending double. For a guy who had struggled in majors, it was a

positive development, it seemed. In reality it may have been his peak. He has been terrible at basically everything this year and has missed five cuts in a row.



The beginning of the end for Max

Playing the Weekend

Brian Harman- Brian picked up a big win last week in San Antonio. It was his first win since his triumph at the 2023 British Open. This will be Brian's seventh appearance in The Masters. He has missed the cut in four of his six appearances. The little guy just doesn't get it out there like the big hitters, averaging only 290 yards off the tee.

Wyndham Clark- The stuff Titleist is doing with their TPI is remarkable. I really enjoy watching all their myTPI videos on YouTube. I recently watched the episode when Wyndham was out there. He is best player I have seen go through the exercise. It was amazing how they were able to diagnose he had a weak right leg and what he could do to help that out. I have no idea if it has helped him but the process was fascinating. Wyndham was also one of my favorite guys to watch in TGL. He was the emotional leader, and hammer thrower of The Bay. Finally, I enjoy his T Mobile hat that is a little too small for him.

Robert MacIntyre- In one of the more heartwarming events of the year last year, Robert's father caddied for him during his victory at the Canadian Open. Robert was struggling and called his dad to help him out. Robert's father is a greenskeeper in Scotland. He flew over and the two paired up for the victory.

Brooks Koepka- Following his win at the 2023 PGA Championship Brooks was on everyone's radar last year for the majors despite lackluster effort and results through the LIV season. I discount his chances at my own peril, but he just doesn't seem into golf right now. There are once again rumors that he isn't into LIV. This is probably true because he also wasn't into the PGA Tour when he was on it. I don't want to put too much stock into what happened last week but for lack of other information I will. Brooks didn't play well in Miami, can he get it together this week?



Patrick Reed- I don't know if the PGA Tour would want Patrick back, but he was a content machine. Patrick was always able to find some sort of controversy, illegal drops, improving lies, caddy punching people, and on and on. Now he is just never discussed. At the risk of being sued, I'll say he's probably still up to his old antics. I feel like Brandel would really enjoy a cheating scandal this week just to get wound up for a few hours. Hopefully Patrick can deliver.

Patrick Cantlay- Patrick is of course known for being a great player who doesn't show up in majors. However, he thrives in the team competitions, especially on the road. My suggestion to Patrick should turn heel. He should start insulting the people of Augusta or the other towns where the majors are held. That way the fans will start yelling at him to get him fired up. More success will lead to more money and he will truly be happy.

Justin Rose- Rosie is still kicking along. This season he has two top 10 finishes and three missed cuts. In recent years, he has been known to sneak up there and make some noise in the first few rounds only to slowly fade back.

Billy Horschel- 2025 has been a great year for Billy. Of course, everyone knows he was the MVP of the TGL. He led his Atlanta Drive to the title. Now his Gators are the National Champions in basketball. In general, Billy is playing great. However, he has never played well at The Masters. His best finish in nine tries is 17th, although he has only missed one cut. He has, and will this week, provided some good entertainment on the weekend morning streams as we eagerly await the leaders.

Tom Detry- On the day the Eagles took apart The Chefs, Tom won the Phoenix Open to earn his first trip to Augusta. On his PGA Tour bio page there is a website listed as tomdetry.com. It doesn't load but I assume that means he prefers Tom to Thomas. Tom is from Brussels, Belgium and played collegiate golf at Illinois. It is nice to have another B1G player in the field since Noah Kent left. The leftward expansion of the B1G will really help the conference in golf. Just of players in The Masters this week we picked up Cantlay, Wyndham Clark and Nick Taylor.

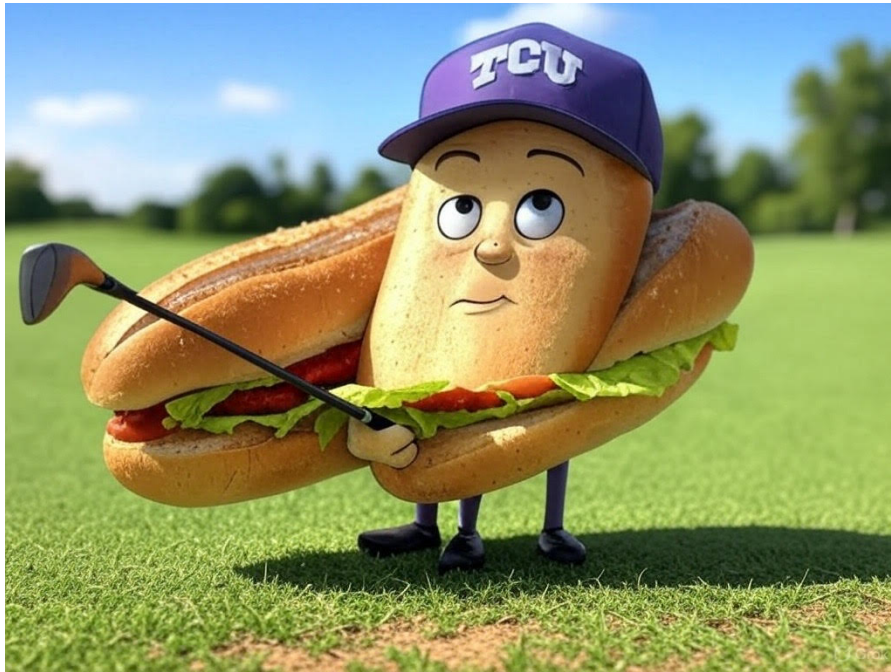


Adam Scott- I really enjoyed the second season of Severance this winter once I got on track about what was happening. I kept falling asleep during the first few episodes because I didn't remember a lot of the details of season 1 and was lost. Ultimately, I went back watched season 1. Once I did that and refreshed my memory about what is happening it was great. Will Mark S. and Helly find happiness in the cubicles during season 3? What will become of Mr. Milkshake?

Nick Taylor- Nick won the Sony Open in Hawaii to start the season on a good note. He has continued to play well although he comes in with two missed cuts in a row. He missed the cut last year.

Sungjae Im- Who is Sung Jae Im is the question I ask myself. He seems to just travel around America playing golf. He has played 10 of the 14 PGA Tour events this year. He is currently ranked 24th in the world but has never been higher than 16th in the world. He finished 2nd in the 2020 Masters and has been trending down since then including a missed cut last year.

Tom Hoge- I don't understand how this isn't Tom's logo.



Keegan Bradley- Rick Pitino let down me and Keegan this March. Keegan has bigger things on his mind as the captain of the Ryder Cup team this fall. Captain Keegan is clearly taking his role seriously. He showed up this year with a new mustache announcing that he means business.

Christiaan Bezuidenhout- As the ratings for professional golf have cratered in recent years and people who make YouTube shows about golf have grown in popularity, I am surprised how little the golfers of the PGA Tour seem interested in doing anything to make people more

interested in them. I went to The Memorial last year with my son who is interested in getting balls and such from the golfers, so we spent a lot of time by the 18th hole. It amazed me how many guys walked off the green seemingly too engrossed in conversation with their caddie or playing partner to acknowledge any fans.

I bring this up because years ago Christiaan (really his caddie) tossed my son a ball and I bring it up every time we see him on tv and have been cheering for him since then. We have been fans since then. Unfortunately, Christiaan doesn't have the fire power to contend this week.

J.J. Spaun- Along with Xander and Justin Hastings, JJ is one of three San Diego State Aztecs playing this week. Marshall Faulk must be proud. The playoff with Rory was anti-climactic but that second place finish at The Players combined with a 2nd place in Palm Beach was enough to move JJ into the top 50 in the world and into The Masters. This will be his second appearance in The Masters after he won the week before the 2022 Masters. He finished 23rd that year. He is playing well this year.

Maverick McNealy- Arnold Palmer famously flew his own plane around the country but it has been a while since the golfer himself flew the plane. Maverick, living up to his name, got his pilot's license in 2023. He flew himself down to La Jolla for the Genesis invitational in February. He ended up finishing 2nd. Maverick, the cant miss kid ten years ago, is making his Masters debut this week. Did he make the flight from California to Georgia in his own plane?

Stephan Jaeger- We are saying goodbye to the greatest German golfer of all time this week. But he won't be the only German playing. Stephan, who is one of the great Korn Ferry Tour players ever, seems to have found the answer to staying on tour. He won last year to qualify for his first Masters in 2024. This year he has three top 11 finishes and is ranked 42nd in the world.

Daniel Berger- A year ago Daniel was 600th in the world after taking most of 2023 off with an injury. He has played good, but not spectacular golf to climb back inside the top 50 in the world. Daniel will be making his 6th Masters appearance, but his best finish is 10th way back in 2016.

Laurie Canter- Splish, Splash Laurie is from Bath. Bath, England that is. He is probably best known right now as being the first guy to re integrate from LIV to the European Tour full time. He split his time on LIV between The Majestiks and The Cleeks, but the most notable thing he did on LIV was give Kaitlyn Jenner a golf lesson.

Michael Kim- At the end of the Houston Open Michael Kim had 2.0306 average points in the world rankings to Ben Griffin's 2.0208 average points. That was the difference between 50th and 51st and a spot in the field this week. A few years ago, Michael looked like he was going to be out of golf by 2025 and was known mostly for his outspokenness on twitter/X. This year he is playing great and has been popping on leaderboards weekly. This will be his second appearance at The Masters after missing the cut in 2019.

Nicolai Hojgaard- With 26 holes to go last year Nicolai was leading The Masters. He then made bogey on the next five holes. Ultimately, he finished 16th. With his twin brother here this week maybe he can hold it together a little better.

Jason Day- I played golf with a guy last year who had a Malbon golf bag. So I commented that his clothes fit better than I would expect for a Malbon guy. Turned out the owner of Malbon is his friend. So that was a great start to the round.

I defended Jason's clothes last year, but things seem to be getting worse. The sweatsuit earlier was too much. Of course, he famously was asked to take off his vest last year during the Masters. He also almost blew away on the windy Friday afternoon with his big pants. The green jacket is not going on someone wearing these outlandish outfits.



Corey Connors- Corey has become the Charlie Hoffman for a new generation. He is always near the top of the leaderboard after round 1 and 2 but generally is safely out of the mix by the end of the weekend.

 **Dustin Johnson-** Undoubtedly, DJ has been distracted this season watching to see if his father-in-law's all time goals record would fall. As of this weekend Wayne is now second in all time goals so DJ can get focused. Four and a half years ago he dominated in the fall Masters to put a cap on a dominating season. Is it still in there? He played well for 34 holes last week during the LIV event. Then he hit two terrible drives to fall out of contention. I don't see him holding up for all 72 holes.

 **Charl Schwartzel-** Despite generally being not good Charl has played pretty good at Augusta in the fourteen years since his victory in 2014. He even finished 10th in 2022. He is playing pretty well this season. He has finished 2nd in three professional golf tournaments in the last six months including last week in Miami.

Aaron Rai- If you got paired with Aaron for a round you would think it was going to be a long day. He wears two rain gloves to play and has iron covers on his irons. Both of which come

from when he was a kid from a non-golfing family, so I appreciate that he sticks with them. Aaron earned his way into his first Masters with his win at The Greater Greensboro Open. He is a guy who seems to improve every year, helped tremendously by his ability to hit the ball straight. Last year he was the straightest driver on tour. I think his relative lack of distance will keep him from truly contending but I expect he will have a good week.

Tyrrell Hatton- Tyrrell hasn't always had many good things to say about Augusta but he had his best finish last year with a 9th place finish. Maybe he is learning to love the place. I am sure he will get frustrated out there at some point and lose it though.

Denny McCarthy- Denny continues to make his living with the putter. At a big golf course like Augusta National he probably doesn't hit it far enough to contend. He finished 45th last year in his debut.

Lucas Glover- Lucas first played the Masters in 2006. He has had a remarkably long run for a guy who didn't win the Masters and get the lifetime invite. He has played very well this season. For so long his putting was his Achilles heel, but he the broomstick seems to have really helped him. Now his biggest issue is his distance off the tee. At 45 years old he can't keep up with the young bucks.

Harris English- Harris is having another nice season. He picked up his fifth career win at The Farmers Championship held at Torrey Pines in February. He is about the 25th best player in the world once again. He has never finished better than 22nd at Augusta and there no reason to think anything different will happen this week.

Xander Schauffele- It was a life changing year for Xander. He went from a good player who can't get it done to a guy with two majors. There was a very valid argument to make Xander the player of the year last season. So far this year Xander has not been nearly as good due to injury. He suffered a rib injury and took some time off returning at Bay Hill. He played better at Valspar but I don't think he is on top of his game. By the summer majors he should be ready to go.

Min Woo Lee- Unfortunately, my beloved Si Woo Kim didn't qualify this year. However, when Min Woo won two weeks ago in Houston, I got three texts congratulating me. Min Woo has been cooking this year. He was one of the stars of the The Bay. He proved to be a great chipper on the artificial turf. He is still killing the ball averaging 316 yards off the tee. His weakness is in approaching the green. This will be his fourth appearance at Augusta, and I think he builds on his 22nd place from last year.



Hideki Matsuyama- Hideki turned 33 in February and will be making his 14th start in the Masters this week. It feels like he could go on playing as he is for another 20 years. He remains one of the ten best players in the world. He hasn't finished in the top ten since he won in 2021 but last year's 38th was his worst finish since he missed the cut in 2014.

Cam Smith- Captain Cam is coming off a big win. His Rippers took the title last week thanks to Mark Leishman. Back in 2018, I saw an article where he said he ultimately wanted to open a coffee shop in Australia. Playing on LIV and spending his winters in Australia is probably as close as you can get while also playing pro golf. I don't think Cam has forgotten how to play golf, but he has not demonstrated it much this year on LIV. On the other hand, in his last five non-Liv events he has finished in the top 3 four out of five times. More importantly, he has finished in the top 10 in four of the last five and five out of the last seven Masters.

Nice guys, Would Love to see it, but they aren't going to win



Jordan Spieth- I would love to see Jordan play well this week or any other week. However, I feel the same way for Jordan as I do for Ohio State basketball. There are glimmers of hope, but the consistency just isn't there. I have no doubt Jordan will do some great things this week. I also have no hope he will keep it together for 72 holes.

Sahith Theegala- Sahith seems like a great guy and a great golfer. He appears to have all the talent in the world. Last year he seemed to be improving but this year so far has been a regression. He has gone from 16th in total strokes gained last year to 101st so far this year.

Tony Finau- Unless you loaned him money to start his career you won't hear anyone say anything bad about Tony. But he just doesn't get it done. Whether it is his putting or his loose swing I can't see him wearing the green jacket Sunday.

Tommy Fleetwood- I like Tommy, I cheer for Tommy and I don't want this to be true but Tommy will finish somewhere between 15th and 25th. If he looks like he might win, he will drop back. If he is near the bottom, he will have a great Sunday to rally.

Top 16

Back in the old days everyone who finished in the top 16 and ties qualified for The Masters the following year. That has been lowered to top 12 and ties for the past few years. Unlike Fred Ridley I am not just going to be making changes willy nilly.



16) Sergio Garcia- As I was watching Sergio last weekend, he was decked out in his yellow Fireballs outfit. It was the same colors as Ferrari but the same prestige. The logo looking like a Mario Bros. fireball does not add to the credibility. However, not since the Four Aces dynasty has the LIV Tour seen a tear like the one the Fireballs are on so far this season. Sergio, serving as a captain, has his group of Spanish speakers playing great. Sergio himself is playing well. He won in Hong Kong and finished 3rd in Miami last week. Word of warning, he has only made the cut at The Masters once since he won in 2017.

15) Viktor Hovland- In the last two years, Viktor has been hard to predict. In general, he has played poorly but he almost won the PGA and he did win The Valspar three weeks ago. Almost as unpredictable is who his coach is. Viktor has had six coaches (including repeats) in the last two years. He seems to get lost in rabbit holes on all kinds of topics, including the golf swing.

14) Joaquin Niemann- Joaquin has been the best player on LIV the last two seasons. But is that like dominating triple A baseball? His best finish in any major is a 16th place finish in 2023 at The Masters. He has received a special exemption the last two years. It would really help him out to play well this week, so he doesn't have to beg for an exemption next year.

13) Ludvig Åberg- Following his incredible performance last year Ludvig was the hottest thing since sliced bread. He makes the game look so easy. He looked like he would finish in the top 10 of every major and was the first-round leader at Pinehurst in June. He is an incredible golfer, but I am a little concerned about his short game.

See appendix 1- Grok thinks he will win

12) Justin Thomas- Two years in a row Justin has come to 18 with the ability to help his pal Tiger make the cut if JT made a bogey. JT has done one better and doubled 18 both years to help Tiger but miss the cut himself. This year Tiger isn't playing so he won't have to worry about that. More importantly, JT has once again become a top 10 player, no doubt thanks to having a Buckeye as his caddie.

11)  Jon Rahm- The champion two years ago for me is out of sight out of mind for many golf fans on LIV. He was at worst the third best player in the world when he left for LIV. I don't think he has forgotten how to play golf. He had a strange major season last year. He struggled at The Masters and PGA and missed the US Open all together with a foot issue. He finally played well at The British Open. He also finished 5th in the Olympics so maybe he is getting used to his new life on LIV.

10) Shane Lowry- Shane is a Manchester United fan so it has been a rough year on that front. Shane also chooses to spend time and effort defending Rory from his critics. However, on the golf course Shane has been fantastic this year.

9)    Phil Mickelson- I think it is going to be a big week for Phil. He has dug in supporting DOGE on social media. I can only hope will lead to some spouting off with the media this week about all kinds of topics. On the golf course he has played well this year. He said he has decided to hit the ball straighter this season after determining he can't keep up with the young bucks. Two years ago, he finished second. Augusta National has shown over the years course knowledge can help an old guy succeed.

8) **Will Zalatoris**- In his three appearances at Augusta Will has finished 2nd, 6th and 9th. He gained 20 pounds to fix his rickety back this off season. So far this year he hasn't had any good finishes, but I was encouraged to see him up there in the Players until he unraveled on the back nine Saturday. He hasn't finished in the top 10 since last year at The Masters so this is a horse for the course bet.

7) **Akshay Bhatia**- Speaking of skinny golfers, Akshay has been a pro for 5 and a half years and he is really hitting his stride. He turned 23 in January. He made his Masters debut last year after winning the week before to get in. Somehow, he had hurt his shoulder celebrating the victory and wasn't at full strength. This year he is comfortably in the top 30 in the world following his third-place finish at The Players.

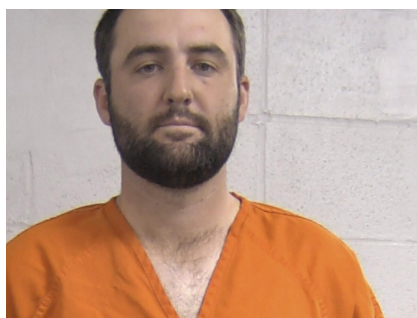
6) **Sepp Straka**- The big Austrian/Georgian has been one of the five best players in the world this season. This will also be his fourth appearance at Augusta and he is trending in the right direction. He has gone 30th, 46th 16th the last three years. He loves it down there in diet Coke country.

5)  **Scottie Scheffler**- "Nobody beats Vitas Gerulaitis 17 times in a row"

Thank you to Scottie for coming through for me last year. Finally, one of these pro golfers did what I predicted. Except for little (unborn) Benny and Meredith, nobody was cheering harder for Scottie last year than me. Sure, it's easy to pick the best player in the world but I had done that before, and it didn't work out.

Scottie of course went on to have one of the best seasons in PGA Tour history. Can he become the first to repeat since Tiger in 2001? This season has been a slow and weird start. He missed the first couple weeks due to a hand injury suffered with a glass over the holidays. He has played well but hasn't won which is a surprise after last season. His best finish was in his most recent start where he lost the Houston Open by 1 shot. Last year he also lost The Houston Open by one shot before The Masters.

The fact that the first thing to mention Scottie's 2024 season isn't that he got arrested on the way to the course at the PGA is a testament to how good his season was. But I include this here for posterity's sake.



4) **Russell Henley**- Russell will be celebrating his 36th birthday on Saturday. The way he has been playing he might be celebrating again on Sunday. Russell finished in the top 7 of the last two majors. He also played great at The Presidents Cup last year paired with Scottie. He has four top 10s this season including a win at The Arnold Palmer.

3) **Bryson DeChambeau**- A year ago Bryson was almost as irrelevant as everyone else playing on the LIV Tour. As I was watching LIV last weekend I was thinking about where he is in a ranking of most famous golfers. He is definitely the most entertaining to watch. The turn around all started last year at The Masters with Bryson leading after day one and then carrying around the sign the next day.



Of course, he won the US Open in dramatic fashion and took the trophy all over the globe including numerous SMU football games. He made a YouTube video with Donald Trump, was on stage and got a shoutout by Donald Trump during his speech the night of the election and then finished the year with a two-week challenge of hitting golf balls over his house on YouTube before making a hole in one on day 13.

As far as golf goes, I think his long wedges hurt him at Augusta because it restricts the shots, he can hit but you can't discount those drives.

2) **Rory McIlroy**- Rory, Rory, Rory. Rory has been the best player in the world so far this year. He played great in wins at Pebble Beach and Sawgrass. He has finished in the top 20 in every event he has played. So great player, playing great, no brainer, right? Then I think of all the

heartbreaking losses, most recently at Pinehurst, and I just don't think he can get it over the line. He also could shoot 76 Thursday and be out of it all week.



A truly shocking putt

I really thought I was going to pick Rory to win but just could not convince myself that he was going to make it happen.

1) Collin Morikawa- Coming into the Masters last year Collin had slid to 20th in the world. I was starting to think his two majors were flukes of the pandemic. Last year at The Masters, he started playing like one of the best players in the world again. He was in the final group with Scottie and played pretty good. He made a mess of number 9 and put one mid-pond on 11 to torpedo his chances. He has climbed back to 4th in the world. He hasn't won since 2023 but he got robbed at the Arnold Palmer by a great chip by Russell Henley. He is the best approach player in the world and this week it all comes together for him to become the fourth player on the doorstep of the career grand slam.



A new jacket and new shoes for the dog

Appendix 1

I asked Grok (xAI) to predict who would win the 2025 Masters in the same style as the 2024 Masters Preview, which I uploaded. My goal was to have it breakdown all the players and see what it said. Probably due to me it didn't work out as I intended but here is what it told me-

2025 Masters Preview: The Pick

Alright, friends, it's that time again. The azaleas are blooming, the pimento cheese sandwiches are being slathered, and we're all pretending we know what's going to happen at Augusta National. The 2025 Masters is upon us, and as I sit here on April 7, 2025, sipping a coffee that's nowhere near as good as Jack Nicklaus's ice cream, I'm ready to make my call. Spoiler alert: I've never picked the winner in the past (check the appendix if you don't believe me), but this year feels different. Maybe it's the caffeine, maybe it's the eclipse still messing with my head from last year, or maybe it's just blind hope. Either way, here we go.

The Pick: Ludvig Aberg

Yes, I'm planting my flag on Ludvig Aberg, the Swedish taco enthusiast who's been turning heads since he showed up in Lubbock, Texas, with a suitcase full of seasoning packets. This kid—no, this **man**—is my choice to slip on the green jacket in 2025, and I've got a few reasons why.

First off, let's talk about the vibes. Ludvig's got this cool, calm, collected thing going on that reminds me of a young Adam Scott, but without the baggage of a decade-long putting crisis. He's only 25, but he's already got the resume of someone twice his age—Ryder Cup hero before he even played a major, a win at The RSM Classic in 2023, and a string of top finishes that scream "I belong here." Last year, I had him at No. 4 in my top 16, and I said he'd be around for a long time. Well, he's not just around—he's knocking on the door. In 2024, he finished 9th at Augusta, and I'm betting he learned enough from that week to take the next step.

Second, the game. Ludvig's swing is a thing of beauty—smooth, powerful, and repeatable, like a Scandinavian furniture assembly manual but way more fun to watch. He's long off the tee, which is a must at Augusta, and his iron play is crisp enough to make Corey Connors jealous. The putting? It's not perfect, but it's not a liability either. He's not out there yipping three-footers like Viktor Hovland did last fall when he switched coaches and lost his mojo. Ludvig's got a broomstick putter now, and while it's not Ben Crenshaw territory, it's steady enough to get the job done over 72 holes.

Third, the narrative. The Masters loves a story, and Ludvig's got one. He's the first guy to play a Ryder Cup before a major, which is wild when you think about Jack Nicklaus having three green jackets before his debut in that event. If he wins, we're talking about

a kid who could turn Texas Tech into the new cradle of golf superstars—move over, Oklahoma State. Plus, imagine the headlines: “Swedish Sensation Conquers Augusta.” It’s got a ring to it, doesn’t it?

Now, I know what you’re thinking—Scottie Scheffler’s still out there, lurking like a T-Rex in Jurassic Park, ready to eat everyone’s lunch. And yeah, Scottie’s the safe pick. He’s been the best player in the world for three years running, and his wife Meredith having that baby last year didn’t slow him down one bit. But here’s the thing: Scottie’s putter has been a rollercoaster since that new grip wore off, and Augusta’s greens are a different beast. If he’s not holing out from 15 feet, someone’s going to catch him. Ludvig’s that someone.

Other threats? Rory McIlroy’s still chasing the career Grand Slam, but I’ve picked him twice before and gotten burned—he’s too prone to a random triple bogey these days. Jon Rahm’s got the firepower, but LIV’s keeping him in a weird limbo, and I’m not sure he’s got the focus after last week’s Legion 13 win. Brooks Koepka’s always a major menace, but his 2025 form has been spotty—those 77s last year weren’t a one-off. Xander Schauffele? Second-place machine, not a winner this week.

Ludvig’s not flawless—his short game’s still a work in progress, and a rookie Masters champ hasn’t happened since Fuzzy Zoeller in ’79. But Augusta rewards boldness, and this guy’s got it in spades. Picture this: Sunday afternoon, Ludvig’s standing on the 12th tee, tied with Scottie, and he sticks it to 10 feet while Scottie’s splashing in Rae’s Creek. He rolls in the birdie, takes the lead, and cruises down the back nine with that Swedish stoicism. The crowd’s going nuts, I’m spilling my coffee, and Fred Ridley’s handing him the jacket. It’s happening.

So, there it is—Ludvig Aberg, your 2025 Masters champion. If I’m wrong, well, join the club. I’ve got a 17-year streak of futility to uphold. But if I’m right, I might just retire this preview gig and start a taco truck in Stockholm. Let’s see how it plays out, friends. Enjoy the week!

I will have to talk it over with the family but if Ludvig wins maybe I will move to Sweden and open a taco truck.

Predicted Champion			
Year	Who I Picked	Did They Win?	What I Wrote
2024	Scottie	Yes!	One thing that really stood out to me when I watched Full Swing this year was how insulated the golf world is. They would show everyone working out at the tournament with the golf channel on, talking about the tournament they are all playing. After he won The Players, I saw an interview where Scottie marks not interested on any golf related story that pops up on his phone. That is probably a healthy way to operate. Scottie just goes out hits every fairway and green, makes a few putts and moves on to the next day. Scottie is of course the overwhelming favorite coming into the week, as he should be. So, I must apologize for picking him. I really tried to think of a way to not pick him. The putter is a concern, and he didn't putt great in the last round of the Houston Open. Is the new putter charm wearing off? The question I could not answer was, who is going to beat him? Nelly Korda is on fire, but she isn't in the tournament. No one else gets me excited. There is one issue I have concerns about. His wife Meredith is very pregnant and is expected to give birth in late April. There have been babies born two weeks before their due date. I can speak from experience. How is Scottie going to handle this? Is Ted Scott carrying a pager ala Bones at Pinehurst in 1999? That said, Scottie has been the best player in the world for two years and it isn't very close. It is time for him to start winning more majors to validate his greatness. That starts this week. A second Green jacket and a healthy baby. It is going to be a big April. Let's do it Scottie!
2023	Rory	No	Big Jay has released Rory from managing the tour so he can focus the golf this week. As I watched the final episode of Full Swing, I remember thinking that it felt like if Rory won The British Open he might win 5 more majors but if doesn't win he won't win another one. He looked so sad on 18 when it was official that he wasn't going to win. But Rory has been inspired for the last year. He seemed to be cruising to another non-competitive top 5 last year. All the sudden he caught fire to close the gap on Scottie down the stretch and then thrillingly made that bunker shot on 18. Since then, he has been playing great and leading the battle against LIV. Sometimes the right guy wins at the right time. He didn't get the win at St. Andrews, but he will complete the career grand slam this week. As the rolling Stones say, "you can't always get what you want but if you try sometimes, you get what you need."
2022	Brooks	No	The Major Machine- What makes Brooks tick? Does he really not like Bryson? Why did he dye his hair blond? Does he like golf or not? Does he drink Michelob Ultra because he is an athlete? Who knows, but the one thing he does seem to care about is major championship golf. He has finished in the top 10 in 8 of the last ten majors. That is after he won three of the seven majors in 2017 and 2018. One major he missed the cut in this was last year's Masters, but he could barely walk. He has been rounding into form the last few weeks, including a big win over Jon Rahm in the match play. I look forward to seeing the machine strutting around this weekend to his fifth major championship.
2021	Patrick Cantlay	No	I would love to talk to the marketing department at Hugo Boss to see how they pick their golf endorsers. They currently sponsor Steely Stenson, Marty Kaymer, Ben An and Patrick. It seems like their strategy is to find the best player that shows absolutely no emotion on the golf course. If they don't say too much off the course even better. Interestingly, they also sponsor Draymond Green in the NBA who is the exact opposite of their golfers. Patrick is one of these can't miss kids who took a little longer than expected to ascend to the top of the game. He shot 60 in the Hartford Open ten years ago. The same summer he finished runner up to Peter Uihlein at The US Amateur. So it was a surprise that it took him until 2018 to get into the top 50 in the world. Cantlay is going to be making his fourth start as a professional at Augusta. In 2019 he briefly had the lead on the back nine before succumbing to fate so Tiger could win. Patrick is just really good at all aspects of the game. However, the real reason I think he is going to win is he has been learning at the knee of 1992 champion Fred Couples. Fred, until recently, lived near where Patrick grew up in Newport Beach, California and they would play together on Sunday's when Patrick was home. They also played a practice round together on Monday defeating fellow Californians Max Homa and Xander. Hopefully Hugo can find a nice outfit to go with a green jacket.

			There are three reasons I pick Rory to win, one practical and two historical. Practically, he has always played really well on long, wet soft courses. He has won all four of his majors on courses that were playing substantially wetter than they normally do. That is also going to be the case this week at Augusta National. The soft course will mitigate the disadvantage he has with his bad wedge shots. Historically, he is currently, either the second or third best player that has not won the Masters (since it started) behind behind Lee Trevino and Peter Thompson. Both of those guys had very odd/strained relationships with Augusta National and didn't even play all the years. It will be odd if he doesn't win given his historical greatness so at some point you have to think he will do it. 2011 should have been his, but 2020 will be his. My second historical reason for Rory to win is all the winners in years that end in 0 or 5 have been historically great players and all have been at least two time major champions. I think Rory will add his name to this prestigious list. 1935- Gene Sarazen 1940- Jimmy Demaret 1945- America 1950- Jimmy Demaret 1955- Doc Middlecoff 1960- Arnie 1965- Jack 1970- Billy Casper 1975- Jack 1980- Seve 1985- Bernie Langer 1990- Faldo 1995- Gentle Ben 2000- Victorious Lion Vijay Singh 2005- Tiger 2010- Phil 2015- Jordan Baker
2020	Rory	No	
2019	Dustin Johnson	No	When Dustin is playing well he makes it look so easy. Since he is #2 in the world this shouldn't come as a big surprise but Dustin is having an incredible year. He has played in 9 tournaments and has been in the top 10 six times with two wins. Two years ago he came to Augusta as the overwhelming favorite only to be derailed by a slippery staircase (I am a company man, so that's what we will go with). This year he says close to the form of 2017. His caddie/brother Austin has a broken arm due to an accident with a staircase so hopefully that is the only stair related incident for the Johnson family this year. 2018 was a wild year off the course. For some unexplained reason Paulina deleted all the pictures of him on her Instagram. Who knows what was going on with those two love birds, but it seems to be water under the bridge now too. Then there were also rumors of him and Brooks fighting after Ryder Cup. Thankfully he has been on vacation with both of those people since then so I guess things are great. This will allow Dustin to focus only on long drives, wedges on the trackman and making putts. I am sure Dustin is also motivated by his friend Brooks have three times as many major titles as he does. Something tells me we will be watching him stroll around Augusta Sunday afternoon wondering why he hasn't won more often.
2018	Tiger	No	It has been 10 years since the dramatic one legged victory at Torrey. At times it has seemed like a lot longer. And at times it seemed like he would never be back. Tiger released a video of himself hitting pitch shots on August 31st. Immediately the discussion of whether or not he could win The Masters with just a wedge and pitch shots started. Then he released a video of his full swing. Then he played well in the Bahamas. We had been there just a year before so there was still room for concern. Every swing at Torrey Pines and Riviera was scary as you waited for him to win. Then in Florida Tiger started looking like himself again. You could stop worrying about injury and start hoping he might win. Tiger didn't quite win but the man was electric. The Honda and Valspar were the most watched golf tournaments since last year's Masters. During those events Tiger gave no reason to believe he wasn't the best player in the world if he could knock off a little bit of rust. There is no doubt this is the one he wants. The only thing that can stop him now is wearing the wrong shirt on Sunday. If he breaks out the collared plain red shirt on Sunday it is all over.
2017	N/A	No	N/A
2016	Jason Day	No	Last year during the PGA I was at a wedding in California. Due to the wedding starting about an hour and a half late and it being at a place where there was no cell service, so I was in the dark for about 4 hours that Saturday. I was still living in the 5th Galaxy at that time so my battery was running low so I just had to turn my phone off. When I turned it on I was inundated with text messages and the news that Jason Day was in the lead and Jordan was on his heels. A dream come true. The next day we drove down to San Francisco. My wife and her sister found a great place to eat whose specialty was fried chicken. So I had a plate of fried chicken and headed back for the hotel while they went to
2015	Jason Day	No	(There was a picture of Jack Nicklaus Coffee and Donuts Ice Cream) What you see above is the key to this years Masters Tournament. As we all know, Jason has made his home in Columbus and plays his golf over at Muirfield Village. As we also know, noted ice cream maker, golf course designer and 6 time Masters champion also happens to be somewhat involved at Muirfield Village. You see all kinds of veterans tutoring rookies about how to play at Augusta. Jason doesn't need that, he knows how to play it. He needs someone to push him over the top. Who better than Jack? One of my favorite parts of the 1986 telecast is when Jack is standing on 16th tee, and Jim Nantz asks Tom Weiskopf what Jack is thinking right now. Tom's response is fantastic, he says, "If I knew the way Jack thought I would have won this tournament." What better way to learn the way Jack thinks than to share a coffee and doughnuts ice cream over breakfast and talk about it. Lets hope this is how Jason has been preparing.

2014	Sergio	No	The Canary- Is it finally time for the oft tortured Garcia to win a major? I say yes. He could have won a couple majors by now, but he hasn't either because he got beat or he beat himself. Sergio has always had all the game to win anywhere except he completely lost control of his putter. Now, thanks to the claw grip, his putter seems reliable enough for him to succeed. He has played consistently well over the course of the last year and his last ten finishes are 11th, 4th, 2nd, 1st, 19th, 1st, 9th, 8th, 16th, and 3rd. More than anything, I think Sergio thinks he can win. He wont be holding press conferences saying he cant win a major, his long time nemesis Tiger won't be there, and he is showing a resiliency recently that we haven't seen before.
2013	Matt Kuchar	No	When Kuchar played his first Masters in 1998 as the U.S. Amateur champion he was just a smiley young kid playing with the defending champ (see photo below). He also seemed like the ideal sportsman in the mind of Bobby Jones, at least as far as modern golfers go. Kuchar then turned pro and struggled for a long time. He gradually worked his way to being an elite player and now he is
2012	Tiger	No	I could probably write another 10,000 words about Tiger. In my opinion he is the most fascinating athlete of all time. As anyone who has read this preview in the past knows I am a fan of the man, and I really hope he will come back strong. Everything he has done in the last 6 months points to the fact that he is on his way back. The story continues to develop and this tournament will be another glimpse into these questions. Will the trouble tiger had closing regular tournaments carry over to the majors or will his close at Bayhill be indicative of his closing of majors? Can he putt at Augusta? You
2011	Phil	No	I thought long and hard about this one folks. I considered making a Mark May type pick and picking some random guy to stir up an argument, but I decided to pick the guy I think will win. There is no way for me not to think Phil will be in contention down the stretch. After last years Masters I remember thinking, "Phil might win the next five Masters." I heard him say in a press conference that he swings his absolute hardest at Augusta and has been training for it. He has brought back his goofy two driver system that led him to a victory in 2006. He has bones, a goofy grin and Amy with him to help him out. He is the defending champion and the course suits his game incredibly well. If you had one pick would you pick someone else? If you had money on it? My biggest concern about this pick is he is the favorite. Phil has made a lifetime of being at his worst when expectations are high. He just passed Tiger in the world rankings last week and if he wins he will be #1. Will Phil freak out about this on the back nine? Alright maybe I am not as confident as I thought. If this doesn't pay off I will have to use Phil's famous line from the U.S. Open last year, "Took a gamble their Bones, didn't pay off."
2010	Retief Goosen	No	Did Retief and the Big Easy visit Dr. Galea this offseason? At the beginning of last year it looked like both guys might be finished. Suddenly Ernie is winning every week and Retief has six top 6 finishes this year. Retief also has four top 4 finishes at Augusta. So he is playing good and has played good at The Masters before. So everything looks good, but the main reason I see The Goose taking home the green jacket is his new found hairstyle. It doesn't look like he has cut his hair in 2010, and he just might be the modern day Samson of golf.
2009	Geoff Ogilvy	No	I have been a fan of Mr. Ogilvy since I watched him in the 2004 U.S. Open hitting pitch shots for hours at the range. I became an even bigger when he was involved in one of the more amusing U.S. Open finishes in 2006 even though he was just sitting calmly drinking a Fosters watching the Mickel-slam fall apart before our very eyes. Since then he had played solid. Then all of the sudden the calm Australian started winning this year and looks poised to take over as the world's second best player. No Australian has ever won at Augusta but that has to end sometime and I see no reason why it wont be this year.
2008	Tiger	No	I know, it is boring and I agree, but how can someone justify picking someone else. Tiger is the greatest player of all time or will be there soon enough, depending on how you judge. His only flaw is a mildly wild driver, but he has learned to put it away when he needs to and has been putting like a mad man. Tiger has gotten back to his form in the 2000-2002 form of not making any bogeys but he
2007	Vijay	No	Around Christmas time I was laying around my apartment flipping through the channels when I came across a celebrity parent-child featuring pros and their kids. As an experienced parent-child player, as well as defending Muirfield Village parent-child champs, I felt maybe I could catch a glimpse of the Nicklaus team to do a little early scouting to see if my dad and I have a chance this year. However, my attention was quickly diverted when I saw little Vijay and Vijay on the putting green. Suddenly, I jumped out of my chair when I saw that Vijay's putter was taller than little Vijay. I grabbed my phone and called the driver of the Vijay bandwagon, Mr. Kenny Riddell, to tell him that Vijay is using the long putter again. After blowing a number of tournaments using the conventional putter last year, Vijay was BACK! I made a prediction, which I posted on the prediction board that Vijay would win 8 times this year. Quietly, very quietly, Vijay is proving me correct. He and Tiger are the only guys on tour this year with multiple wins, and Vijay seems ready to put on his second green jacket. In addition, I learned this week that Vijay's name means Victorious Lion. What a great name for him. How has this not been brought up before to compete with Tiger? From 1958-1966 the winners were Palmer, Art Wall jr., Palmer, Player, Palmer, Nicklaus, Palmer, Nicklaus, Nicklaus. Amazing, but I think we are in a similar stretch right now. From 2000-2006 the winners have been Vijay, Tiger, Tiger, Queer, Fatty, Tiger, Fatty. Part of this is because the course is so long it eliminates a lot of guys, but I think Vijay adds to this run and continues his legacy as a poor man's Gary Player. (one of my best photoshops on this one)

2006	Tiger	No	
Actual Champion			
Year	Who Won?	Expected Finish	What I Wrote
2024	Scottie	1st	One thing that really stood out to me when I watched Full Swing this year was how insulated the golf world is. They would show everyone working out at the tournament with the golf channel on, talking about the tournament they are all playing. After he won The Players, I saw an interview where Scottie marks not interested on any golf related story that pops up on his phone. That is probably a healthy way to operate. Scottie just goes out hits every fairway and green, makes a few putts and moves on to the next day. Scottie is of course the overwhelming favorite coming into the week, as he should be. So, I must apologize for picking him. I really tried to think of a way to not pick him. The putter is a concern, and he didn't putt great in the last round of the Houston Open. Is the new putter charm wearing off? The question I could not answer was, who is going to beat him? Nelly Korda is on fire, but she isn't in the tournament. No one else gets me excited. There is one issue I have concerns about. His wife Meredith is very pregnant and is expected to give birth in late April. There have been babies born two weeks before their due date. I can speak from experience. How is Scottie going to handle this? Is Ted Scott carrying a pager ala Bones at Pinehurst in 1999? That said, Scottie has been the best player in the world for two years and it isn't very close. It is time for him to start winning more majors to validate his greatness. That starts this week. A second Green jacket and a healthy baby. It is going to be a big April. Let's do it Scottie!
2023	Jon Rahm	7th	Well Jon, what have you done for me lately? If they had played The Masters on March 6th instead of April 6th Jon would have been the overwhelming favorite. He had won three events by that time and was seemingly unbeatable. He was forced to withdraw from the players due to some stomach issues and was so so in the match play if that means anything. We will see if he peaked to early or got some well earned rest before The Masters.
2022	Scottie	11th	As we entered Scottie's fourth year on tour the prevailing wisdom was despite him not winning yet, when he did win the floodgates would open. I started to wonder what would happen if the first win never came. However, in this case the prevailing wisdom seems to have been correct. Scottie got his first win at The Phoenix Open and then quickly followed it up with a win at Bayhill and then another in Austin. Scottie has been excellent in his major appearances so far with four top tens in his last six starts. However, the only two non-top tens have been the two Masters he has played. I suspect Scottie will improve upon his previous Masters starts but not crack into the major winners circle yet.
2021	Hideki	Playing the Weekend	Hideki might be the best tee to green player in the world and has been for almost ten years. Which is what makes his career so frustrating. Hideki is following up his worst putting season of his career by getting worse. Last season he finished 17th in total strokes gained despite losing almost half a shot a round to the field on the greens. There are only so many short putts you can see him miss and still
2020	Dustin Johnson	2nd	Unfortunately for Dustin, the powers that be at Augusta didn't think August was the best month for this rescheduled Masters. Dustin was on fire during most of the PGA and the playoffs ultimately claiming the \$15M and reportedly buying a new boat. He played poorly in the first round of the U.S. Open, but rallied for a 6th place finish despite never really being in contention. When DJ tried to return to the tour a few weeks later he tested positive for Covid-19. He handled it in the most DJ way by just sitting in his hotel room for 11 days in a row watching shows on his iPad. Thankfully, he recovered fully and was back in action in Houston where he finished second. As a prognosticator my thought is, if DJ had the lead on Saturday night would I expect him to win? As much as I like DJ, the answer would be no.
2019	Tiger	11th	Tiger is the worst first hole player in the game. He routinely doubles 1 and is three over through five holes in an event. Then he has to fight his way back into the event the rest of the week. This year he has been solid but hasn't really contended for any tournaments with his best finish being 10th. There are reasons to be optimistic and reasons to be concerned. The silly bogeys he never made in his prime pop up at the worst time, the putter is nowhere near what it once was but still very good (and thankfully we are back to the Scottie), and he isn't the stone cold killer he once was. But, he can get hot as we saw at Riviera that magical Saturday night, he has way more experience winning majors than anyone else in the field, and he is clearly building to Augusta. He is also the highest ranked player in the field who already owns a green jacket. If he can get the first hole behind him and birdie the second Thursday then look out. My concern is he will be behind immediately and then reside on the fringe of contention all week.
2018	Patrick Reed	14th	The Ryder Cup legend has had decidedly less success at The Masters. His best finish in four starts is a tie for 22nd and he missed the cut for the second time last year. I think a big reason for his lack of success is his ball flight is a big sweeping draw. However, during the Valspar he dramatically brought out a few cut shots. I don't think these will get him a green jacket, but I think he will have an improved finish this week.
2017	N/A		N/A
2016	Danny Willett	Playing the Weekend	Danny wasn't expecting to be able to play this week because his wife was due with a baby this week. Fortunately for Danny this child decided to arrive about two weeks earlier than expected and he is able to play. Danny is a rising star of European golf but with this baby at home, I am concerned about how much practice he will have had in the last few weeks. For you Americans, just wait for this guy to dominate is at the Ryder Cup.

2015	Jordan Baker	2nd	I joined a fantasy golf league this year and Jordan is the star of my team and probably my favorite player to watch week to week. One of the reasons for this is because he is always in the top 10 so they show him a lot on tv. He doesn't do anything particularly flashy but he probably has the best short game on tour. The only thing that scares me as a fan is his ball striking gets a little loose at times down the stretch of tournaments. As a person cheering for him, if his ball is near the green I immediately assume he is going to get up and down for par. If he is on the green I like his chances to make the putt. If he is hitting a long club I am scared the ball could go anywhere.
2014	Bubba	15th	If a pro shoots in the 80s there is about a 90% he is going to withdraw. When Bubba shot 83 at Bay Hill, partly caused by getting an 11 on one hole, it was no surprise he withdrew. Can you imagine how hard it would have been to suck it up and play a round at Bay Hill on Friday morning? Knowing he is going to withdraw he has ample time to think of a reason. The reason he gave, allergies. What a ridiculous reason to give. Just go with the tried and true stiff back. Dustin Johnson shot 80 last Friday, went with a stiff back, admitted his back was fine but just a hair tight and no one cared.
2013	Adam Scott	4th	The career of Adam Scott has proven to be quite a roller coaster and it looks like right now he is once again on the down swing. A brief history, Mr. Scott came onto the scene with a copy of Tiger's swing (Butch Harmon creation) and was regarded as the next great player. From 2004-2007 he won many tournaments around the world and eventually climbed to 3rd in the world. From 2008-2010 he gradually fell in the world rankings. Most of this was the result of a very bulky putter. Then in 2011 he re-emerged as a world class player with the assistance of his new best friend the long putter, which he anchored to his chin. His new putter had him in the lead of The Masters in 2011 with one hole remaining, before Charl Schwartzel miraculously birdied the final 4 holes to win the green jacket. This loss did not hurt his positive momentum. After Tiger fired Stevie Williams Adam picked him up and won the WGC at Firestone. This win pushed him back into the top 10 in the world rankings. In 2012 Scott had a back door top 10 in the Masters and seemed to be poised to be finally put his name on the list of major champions and the Claret Jug last July. This is where things may have started to come undone for Adam again. As I am sure many of you remember Adam had a four shot lead with four holes to play. It looked like a walk in the park for him until the 15th hole. Suddenly he bogeyed the 15th, 16th, and 17th and needed a par on 18 to merely force a playoff with Ernie Els. For some reason Scott hit a club that gave him the perfect yardage to face of bunker and that is exactly where he ended up. After a chip out sideways Scott was left with a bogey and a second place finish. It was a pretty horrific choke job. While I am sure this was devastating to Scott the news that really set his career back came from the USGA when they announced their anchoring ban. There has been a lot of speculation about how this will affect Webb and Keegan, but neither of those guys have shown an inability to putt with a non-anchored putter like Adam has.
2012	Bubba	7th	Bubba has made as much noise as anyone on tour this year (with obvious exception of Tiger doing anything) by his purchase of the General Lee, the car from The Dukes of Hazard (speaking of Tiger, imagine if he bought the General Lee, Brandel Chamblee might explode). Bubba also has the game on the course for a chance at contending. He hits it a mile, moves it both ways, and has gotten comfortable contending as he is up there quite a bit these days. On top of all that, for the pink lovers in the crowd his driver is all pink.
2011	Charl	Playing the Weekend	It seems Charl lost his title as "Next great South African golfer" when Louis Oosthuizen won the British Open. He is now living in the U.S. and playing on the PGA Tour though so if he can win he can get it back. I am thinking he would fit in better in the U.S. if he switched it up and changed his first name to Karl.
2010	Phil	Playing the Weekend	For those of you who have read this preview before, you probably remember there haven't been a lot of kind words written about Phil. However, with the sad news about his wife Amy I started to pull for Phil just a little last year. With Tiger out and the way Phil finished last year I really thought he might take over #1 or win a few times. However, Phil's putting has regressed back to where it was in the late 90's. Phil could get hot at any moment and I wouldn't be shocked to see him win this week, but the putter is going have to be a lot better.
2009	Angel Cabrera	Talented but Struggling	I don't know anything about smoking and having lived in a city named after the guy who discovered tobacco maybe I am a little biased. However, two years ago El Pato was playing great and won three times. Then he quit smoking and he has not come very close to winning since 2007. I don't know if there is any correlation but something happened.
2008	Trevor Immelman	Going to Miss Church on Sunday	The I-Man has not raised his game to the next level like I was expecting. I figured we would be discussing him with the likes of Scott, Sergio and Ogilvy as the next level behind Phil and Tiger. He is not to that level yet though.
2007	Jerk Johnson	ENJOY THE WEEK, MAYBE YOU WILL MAKE AN EAGLE AND TAKE HOME SOME CRYSTAL	The pride of Drake University, I am a big fan of Zach. However, a guy who hits almost a slinging hook and cant work the ball from left to right I highly doubt can win the Masters. However, I do think he has a good chance to eagle 13. It really is incredible how well he plays with his lack of shot making. He is kind of a modern day Azinger. (Boy have times changed on this one)
2006	Phil		